With What Remains

yiğit feza

Preface

This is a fairy tale. But not the kind told before sleep; the kind you reach for on a night you cannot sleep, in that dead hour.

Fairy tales do not lie; they only tell the truth in a language the truth itself could not bear. Everything in these pages is sediment, gathered drop by drop at those thin crossing-points where waking and dream dance together, touch, and part. Do not try to tell which drop was lived and which was dreamt; if they could be told apart, it would not be a fairy tale.

There is a man here, and there is rain. There is a blue, and there is a red. And a flower waiting to be scattered on the wind — knowing its end, resisting all the same.

Some of us live a life whole. Into the hands of others fall only pieces; and with those pieces we love, with those pieces we hope. This tale is for those who live with what remains.

Part the curtains. Let a little light come in.

There is an hour when a house falls most deeply silent. Long past midnight, still far from morning — that dead hour. An interval no day will claim, fallen out of the calendar.

A man lived there. Only there. Nowhere but there. For loneliness, too, has a house of its own; and once a man has moved in, he forgets every other address.

His curtains were drawn. He let none of the light outside come in; for inside, nothing remained for that light to touch. Beyond the glass there was a city — cars, shop windows, shoulders brushing shoulders. All of it a film with the sound turned down. Playing, and no one watching.

He slept by day and lived by night. Not by the calendar's hours, but by loneliness's own. The clock on the wall had stopped long ago; no one had wound it. To him, all hours were the same hour now anyway.

The air of the room carried its own weight. Tobacco. Cold coffee. The sweet smell of mildew from windows unopened for months. The ashtray was full; every stubbed end an uncounted hour. They had fallen the way leaves fall; and he, like a man counting falling leaves, had counted them: one, two, three. Then he had stopped. Because counting the last one changed nothing.

In a drawer there was a rubber stamp. Once it had been a seal; pressed to paper, it had meant a signature, a promise, a tomorrow. Now its ink had dried. From time to time the man would take it out, weigh it in his palm, and put it back.

On the table, unopened envelopes. Letters of condolence. His father had been dead for months, but he had not opened them. To open them would make it true. Unopened, the father was still a possibility; someone who went on living inside a sealed letter. For we do not bury our dead — we bury the fact of their dying; and an

unopened envelope is a small, stubborn shrine in which the living keep their dead alive.

A man deceives himself most in order not to lose the ones he loves. And this man was a master of that art.

There was only one place he could breathe: on a screen. There his name was different, his face was different. He wrote like a stranger to himself — and that stranger was alive, quick, made everyone laugh. In the middle of the night he would leave a sentence there; by morning thousands had carried it from hand to hand.

This was grief's subtlest cruelty: everywhere he was himself, he had collapsed; in the one place he was not himself, he was loved. Was it really love, though? Or the strange, cold comfort of being applauded unseen, of existing without being caught? He could write with such clarity because his heart was broken to just that degree.

Then he turned to the notebook.

There was a notebook no one knew of; a notebook of poems never published, never read aloud to anyone. The place where the mask was undone and set aside. That night, taking up his pen, he was not writing something new; he was copying out once more a poem written years before, a poem that had never once gone quiet inside him since. What overflowed from him was not a name, not a face. It was a flower. He had not named it then, and he did not name it tonight; for if he named it, it would scatter.

The poem went like this: the two of them were like a dandelion blooming in a corner; so beautiful, so white, the envy of bridal gowns, the longing of angels. Waiting for a child to come running headlong through the fields, to pluck it and blow; so defenseless, so knowing of its end. In the autumn when the wind blows hardest,

veins near freezing, resisting and resisting — knowing the wind would win again. They, scattering tuft by tuft. On one side, everything the world calls an ending; on the other, their falling to earth to come into being again. Sometimes, he would say within himself: even our end is endless; so beautiful, so life-giving.

When he set down the final full stop, his hands were trembling. He had chosen, for years, not to know why. Every autumn the same wind blew through him, the same shiver came; he never gave it a name.

When a star draws away, they say, its light shifts toward red. A light whose source has long since gone out, yet whose glow is still on the road. The man hesitated to call his own state longing; longing was something one could return from, while his was the gaze one sends after a star already gone invisible. And he gazed. Knowing it would not return, he gazed — the way one looks at the sea, not because one expects anything, only to have looked. For waiting is hope; and looking is the stubborn habit left standing in the place hope abandoned long ago. A man can hold a door ajar for years, knowing no one will ever come through it; because to close it — that, at last, would be to end it.

He closed the notebook. The only thing stirring in the house was a handful of songs turning over and over at low volume. The same songs, every night, from the beginning. He no longer listened to the words; they were like a breath filling the emptiness. He did not know that at that very hour, at the far other end of the same city, behind another window, someone else was listening to the same songs. Two separate silences were breathing under one sky.

And then.

A light flickered in the dark. A tiny notification; one of thousands falling that night. He was not going to look. And he didn't, at first. He lit his cigarette, blew the smoke at the ceiling,

watched it come apart. Then, for no reason at all, his finger went to the screen of its own accord.

A name.

Before he read the name, something happened. Through the gap beneath a door locked for years, a thin current of air passed across the middle of his chest — a coolness so old, so familiar, that he did not need to read the letters to know it. The body remembers some things before the mind does. The mind consents to forget; it gives up, closes the door, goes on its way. But a scent, a voice, a warmth — these the body keeps, and the body never forgives.

For a moment, through the room's smell of mildew and tobacco, a wholly different scent slipped in. The scent of a long-forgotten summer evening, spilling from the pages of an old book where dried roses are kept. Sharp lavender and earth; warm and wild. It was not real, he knew. But memory sometimes comes alive at the tip of the nose, before the eye and before the mind.

His fingertips went cold. The cigarette at the edge of his lip forgot to burn; its ash fell under its own quiet weight, and no one noticed.

The curtains were still drawn. The hour was still that stopped, dead hour. But the house was no longer silent. Somewhere far away, a rain that had ceased years ago was beginning again. (So some rains never cease; they only wait until they find a sky to fall from.)

This story does not truly begin there. That moment was only a door; behind it, a long corridor reaching back. For no one lives a life from beginning to end, in proper order. We live it in pieces, doubling back, always a little incomplete. Whatever falls into our hands — with that we love, with that we hope, with that we exist.

So this man had always lived; not with the whole, but with what remained.

Let us go back, then. To the moment when nothing had yet been lost, when everything was still more blue.

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There was a man who had not yet lost anything. Twenty-five, at that age when the world comes easily. Tall, dark, the kind who leaves a weight on whatever he looks at. But the real matter was not his face; it was his speech. Every sentence out of his mouth, even the plainest, would curl somewhere along its length and turn into poetry. People fell silent to listen to him.

His name was Fuat.

There were always people around him; people who desired him, who wrote to him. Fuat had long had his fill of this attention. Like a man who has never known hunger reaching across a table — neither hurrying nor truly wanting. Being loved felt as ordinary to him as getting wet in the rain; one more drop made no difference.

He did not know yet. One day a single rain would come and soak his entire life. And what it soaked would never dry again; for some rains do not fall on the skin, but inward.

A day in August. The city was melting in the heat. The sky was a blue faded from being looked at too long.

Inside, a pyramid. Glass, and blue. The light falling from its peak turned everything blue; the escalators, the shop windows, the faces — all of them steeped in that cool blue. Fuat does not see it yet. Years later he will write this light again and again; but today the place is only somewhere to shop, a coffee break, an ordinary day.

And then he sees her.

Someone is standing at the very center of that blue light. A coffee in her hand. She is laughing — at whom, at what, who can say. But her laugh will not fit inside her face, will not fit inside her cup.

Something invisible and piercing scatters from her; Fuat feels it pass through his very cells.

Her hair, above all. Curly, abundant, a tumult too large for her head. Hair free as birds, so entirely its own that he would not have dared touch it. You should have seen it through his eyes, migrating strand by strand into his heart... Not the swelling of a head of hair, but of a heart.

And the world around them is erased. The hum recedes, the voices dim. An interval without place, without time. The world stops for a moment, only to show these two. The walls widen, the ceiling lifts; breathing becomes easy.

A question crosses his mind, almost in anger: is this love at first sight? His reason cannot hold it, and he is furious with his reason. Because he did not believe in love. More precisely: he did not believe love could catch him this easily, in the middle of a crowd. All his life, it was he who had governed feeling. For the first time a feeling was governing him — and it had caught him unprepared.

The wavelengths of an approaching light compress, they say; it deepens into blue. That day, beneath that pyramid, everything coming toward him was blue.

The girl pushed a strand of hair behind her ear, tilted her head, and laughed. The thin steam rising from her cup hung suspended in the blue light for a moment, then dissolved. Watching that steam dissolve, Fuat did not know that this was exactly what the scene would leave him: the steam of a coffee, a curl of hair, and a laugh too large for a face.

A friend was with him — Taner. His oldest friend; a brother from their school days. Taner knew the girl; she had just started working there, a few shopfronts down. He did not know her name, but said he could introduce them. He said it lightly, the way one offers to buy a friend a coffee.

In that moment, neither Taner nor Fuat could know what door that small sentence was easing open. Some doors open so quietly that even the one who opened them cannot remember, years later, having crossed the threshold. Taner, without ever knowing it, became the threshold that bound two lifetimes together.

He never afterward remembered how he crossed over to her. His feet carried him; his mind came along behind.

Fuat always had a line ready. In that moment, his tongue failed him. He stood there like a man who, for the first time in his life, did not know what to say. And perhaps for exactly that reason, what came out of his mouth was not a rehearsed charm but something true.

They talked. Not words to be set down in order; those first scattered sentences that hang in the air while an invisible thread is being drawn taut between two people. Fuat asked; the girl answered.

And what was this girl's name?

Yağmur. Rain — for that is what the name means in his tongue; the word and the weather are one.

Fuat paused for a moment. Until that day, rain had been nothing to him but weather; from now on it would be a name, a face, a curl of dark hair. Later — much later — he would remember her every time the sky darkened.

When she looked at him, she did not look the way others looked. In the gazes turned toward Fuat there was always the shadow of wanting something; in hers, that shadow was absent. There was only a curiosity — the pure attention a child brings to discovering something for the first time. Fuat was used to being loved; not to being seen. He learned the difference that day.

He also learned, that day, that she studied physics. The discipline that teaches the light of stars, their distances, the way their colors shift. One day this girl would explain to him why a light shifts toward red. And the same girl, years later, would teach him the true meaning of that redshift — the one written in no book. But not yet. For now, everything was blue. (Blue is the color of approaching light; but everything that approaches is also that which will one day draw away.)

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The day they became lovers was never announced, never pinned to a date. It simply happened; the way one season turns into another.

First, a language was built between them. A small dialect belonging to the two of them alone, meaningless to any ear that overheard it. Yağmur called him ömrüm — "my life, my whole lifetime"; in the way she said it there was the impossible lightness of folding an entire life into a single breath. Fuat answered her with the same word. And strange to say: from the mouth of this man, who had strung together countless fine words for dozens of women, a word was pouring out, for the first time, at its own full weight.

Their love was made of poetry. They wrote each other verses and read aloud what they had written. The two of them were walking on air. They were like two rivers with neither source nor mouth, flowing only toward each other; and like every river, they flowed without wondering where they would arrive. Yet every

river reaches a sea; and every sea has long forgotten the river that feeds it.

There was a lawn at the university. In the late afternoons, when the sun softened, Fuat would lay his head on Yağmur's knee. The sky stood wide and calm above them; now and then a flock of migrating birds passed over, birds that knew their way. In the cradle of her collarbones lay a boundless sky.

There he would sing to her. His voice was nothing much, but Yağmur loved to listen; because the point was not the voice — it was knowing that this voice lowered itself for her alone. Then he would move on to poetry. Yağmur would run her fingers through his hair, and when Fuat tired he would fall silent and catch his breath against her neck. In those moments he wanted nothing; wanting was the business of those who lacked.

When the dark came down and the sky filled with stars, it was Yağmur's turn. She was the one who studied physics. She would rest her head on Fuat's chest, point at the stars, and explain. How light travels. How the color of a star slowly reddens as it draws away from us.

Most of the time Fuat listened not to what was told but to the teller. But that night, one sentence engraved itself in him: every light that draws away shifts toward red. In that moment it was only a beautiful piece of knowledge. Years later it would become the bitterest truth of his life — and the one who first taught it to him would be this same woman. But that evening the two of them were only looking at the sky, with less than a hand's span between them.

One day, out of nowhere, the rain came down. An August rain; sudden, warm. They ducked under a tree, then gave up on shelter. Yağmur let herself be soaked beneath her own name. Fuat looked at her and thought: this girl was not named by accident. They went home drenched, doubled over with laughter. Fuat would search for

that rain for a long time afterward; for one learns the worth of certain rains only after years of drought.

There was the garden of an old shrine — their stolen paradise. Sometimes Yağmur brought her mother too. The three of them would sit at the wooden table of a tea stall and drink strong, dark tea. The noise of the city stayed outside the wall; inside there were only birdsong, the touch of a spoon against a glass, and the mother's soft laughter.

To sit at the same table with the mother of the woman he loved bound the love to a family, to a patch of earth. Belonging was something Fuat had never once tasted. And like everything that puts down roots, he now had, for the first time, something he could fear being torn from.

Valentine's Day was approaching. For the first time in his life, Fuat thought that a gift was something that could not be bought. He began days in advance; at night, after everyone slept, he sat at his desk and made an album. Photographs, little notes, a dried flower pressed between the pages... On every page a memory, beneath every photograph a line of verse; some he chose from his old poems, some he wrote that night, for that page alone. He worked with scissors and glue and a jeweler's patience. His fingers did not mind the paper cuts, his eyes did not mind the sleeplessness; for every page that passed through his hands was, in truth, a day lived over again.

When Yağmur took the album, she turned the pages at first, and then could turn them no longer; her eyes had misted over. On every page she was meeting a small piece of her own life — pieces she had thought long gone by, gathered one by one and kept by someone. So someone had treasured what she had lived as much as she herself did. She could say nothing; she pressed the album to her

chest. And for days and nights afterward, she would sleep with her arms around it.

A few days later came Yağmur's birthday. Fuat took her to an elegant restaurant; white tablecloths, candlelight, low music. Yağmur was very beautiful that evening; but in Fuat's eyes, what made her beautiful was not the pomegranate-flower dress — it was that she was sitting across from him. They ate a long, unhurried dinner.

After dinner, Fuat took her up above the city, to a hillside where the plain unrolled from one end to the other beneath their feet. Below them the great plain burned with a thousand lights, as if the sky had grown tired that night and laid all its stars down upon the earth. A wind was coming down off the mountain, cool and clean. Fuat wrapped his arms around her from behind, as in the old days, and sang into her ear; his voice was nothing much again, and again it did not matter at all. Then he moved on to poetry, and in the middle of that wind he recited "Mountain Wind" to her. Yağmur turned and looked at him; the depths of her eyes shone brighter than all the lights below, glittering like a star.

One day Yağmur made börek. For the first time. She had risen early, rolled the dough herself, and brought it over in a flurry. There was flour on her hands, a strand of hair stuck to her forehead; and like that, she seemed to Fuat the most beautiful thing in the world. The börek was perhaps not perfect; the edges overdone, the center undercooked. But Fuat ate it with an appetite unlike anything he had ever brought to any food in his life. Inside that pastry there was more than flour and cheese: a morning's labor, and the love inside all that flurry.

One evening, they left the world outside the door. Fuat went into the kitchen. He turned the salmon in the pan with care; he made the salad choosing every leaf one by one. Yağmur leaned against

the doorframe, watching him. When they sat down, at the first bite Yağmur closed her eyes and for a moment said nothing; then she laughed — that laugh too large for her face. A love spoken in börek had been answered in salmon. Sometimes loving was only this: the wish to place the finest morsel in someone's mouth. All languages are forgotten; this one is not.

After dinner they put on a film. The Notebook. On the screen, as two lovers found each other in the rain, Yağmur laid her head on Fuat's shoulder. Both thought the same thing; neither said it: their own August rain. The film went on, but no one was watching anymore; two people were only feeling the hand's span of distance between them slowly melting away. The rain on the screen stopped somewhere. The one in the room was beginning.

Then, the way day surrenders itself to evening, just so, they moved to the bed. The light was low; a shy, respectful light. Their clothes fell the way leaves fall in autumn — unhurried, inevitable, silent.

Yağmur's skin was the night sky; her moles, its stars. It had always been she who explained the sky to him; but that night, the sky was her. Fuat, who had watched that sky from a distance all this time, found it for the first time a hand's span away, and with a mapmaker's patience, by feel, he learned every star by heart. He discovered constellations no one knew, on her shoulders, in the curve of her back.

Their kisses were slow. Whoever hurries is curious about the destination; they had no place they wished to reach, only a moment they wished to remain in. Each slow kiss was a graceful effort to stop that moment; like trying to hold a flowing river in cupped hands — futile, but the most beautiful futility in the world. Time, perhaps only that night, slowed a little for the sake of two people.

Then Yağmur looked at him. And from that look a cry fell — silent, yet filling everything in the room: I want to be yours, it seemed to say. Fuat heard that cry. And in her eyes, the cry became two drops of rain.

No one said anything. Everything there was to say was inside those two drops already. Fuat drew her to his chest; against that chest, Yağmur heard a heart beating faster than her own. The night held the two of them there, just so, in the middle of that half-finished sentence.

Toward morning, they slept at the two ends of a single breath. That night engraved itself in both of them and never once left; but in what form it was engraved, neither ever knew — as a miracle lived, or as a prayer left unfinished... (For what is completed is forgotten; what is left half-done bleeds forever somewhere — and the place that bleeds is the place that remembers.)

One July evening, it was Fuat's birthday. He had wanted no crowd; a small table was laid at his home. They were four: Fuat, Yağmur, his grandmother, and an aunt. The cake was cut, the candles blown out, the grandmother's laughter filled the room; the house warmed with a warmth it had not known in a long time.

After the cake they were to move on to the real meal; the aunt had cooked that evening. But at the very first bite, the spoons hung in the air: the grandmother, as ever, had slipped into the pot not a pinch but a fistful of salt, without letting anyone see. The aunt complained — "Mother, again?" — the grandmother burst out laughing; the food was left where it stood, and that night they filled up on cake. It was a small moment; the kind made to be forgotten. But at that table sat someone who forgot nothing. Yağmur carried that salt on her palate for years; wherever she tasted a morsel too salty, a July evening, a burst of laughter, an old woman's mischievous face would come and quietly take a seat at her table.

(Memory keeps such things above all; not the great days, but the small accidents perched at their edges.)

All evening the grandmother studied Yağmur, long and slow — not like someone searching for a thing, but like someone wanting to be sure of what she had found. At one point, letting no one hear, she leaned toward Fuat. "This girl will make your life a beautiful one," she said. "Don't you ever let her go." Ömür — life, their secret word — had fallen, this time, from a voice a century old; as if the old woman, without ever knowing it, had spoken their private tongue.

Then, letting no one see, she unpinned the silver brooch from her breast. A small pin that had passed to her from her mother and was meant to pass from her to a bride, the rose upon it darkened by the years. Without a word, she fastened it to Yağmur's collar.

No one said anything aloud in that moment. But Yağmur understood; she was being received into an invisible binding of roots, into a family. From that day on, the pin stayed with her always. Nothing entrusted to her ever fell from her hands again.

At night, on the phone, they would talk until both surrendered to sleep. Often there was nothing new left to say; they would only listen to each other's breathing, at the two ends of the line, sharing the same silence. Yağmur forgot nothing. Keeping was her way of loving. Once, she reminded him, word for word, of a sentence Fuat had half-mumbled months before. Fuat stopped for a moment and thought to himself: what are you — a djinn? He did not ask it aloud; the question stayed inside him, and waited there for years.

One evening, they were to meet before the lights of the funfair. Yağmur appeared in the distance. And she did not stop — she ran. Through the crowd, under the blinking lights, she ran until her breath gave out and threw herself at Fuat. He caught her in the air. For a moment the world spun, and all the lights of the funfair spun

with them. Longing had become a body; there was nothing to say — the embrace was saying everything. Fuat said nothing, could not have; he only held her a little tighter. As if, were he to let go, all those lights would go out at once.

But somewhere in every blue sky, before it can yet be seen, a cloud hangs waiting.

One evening the families came together for the first time, at the old mansion called Sümbüllü Bahçe — the Hyacinth Garden. A garden, a table. The two sides sat down with an unease hidden behind their smiles. There were unsaid things in the air: the difference in age, the expectations. Glances that asked "how serious is this?" but could not come to words.

Fuat talked as he always talked, trying to melt the ice of the table with his words. But this time the spell did not quite hold. Under the table, Yağmur took his hand; her fingers were cold.

Fuat never forgot that coldness. That coldness was a harbinger. But harbingers are only ever understood after the news they carry has already come to pass.

Nothing was broken that night. Still, on the way home, Fuat carried a weight inside that he could not name. For the first time, he realized their love did not belong to the two of them alone. Outside there was a whole world, and that world would not say yes to everything.

That night, it crossed his mind that something so blue might one day quietly shift toward red. And he chased the thought away, almost in fear. It was still early.

But some shadows make themselves felt before they fall.

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No love ends in a day. The small things die first.

The night calls grew shorter first. Once, they had talked until sleep defeated them, talked even in silence; now gaps crept in between the sentences, and the gaps kept growing. The poems thinned. The lines that had once poured out of Fuat by themselves no longer came; the spring inside him no longer knew what to say.

Life came between them. Before Yağmur stretched a long road; a degree unfinished, a future to be built. Fuat, meanwhile, fell into his first great pit. A venture they had set their hopes on turned out to be a swindle; the money went, and what was left was debt, and shame. The true ruin was not the money. For the first time he had been defeated at something; for the first time, he thought that in Yağmur's eyes he was no longer flawless. And that thought entered him like a worm, and settled in.

That cold hand beneath the table grew, silently, through the months. No one named it. But both of them began to feel an invisible distance opening, even within the same room. They still loved each other; that was never the question. Sometimes loving is not enough. And learning that is more bitter than not loving. For not loving is an absence; to love and have it not suffice is to go hungry with full hands.

One dinner passed, for the first time, without their finding a single thing to say; and once, even their silence had been a conversation. Fuat made a joke, Yağmur laughed — but her laugh came a second late. And that one second dropped into both their hearts like a stone.

They had one last beautiful day. It was as if both of them sensed it was the last, but neither said so. They laughed more than ever, fell silent more than ever. At one point, Yağmur looked at Fuat for a long, long time; like someone memorizing something, engraving a face into memory before leaving. Fuat could not read that look in the moment. Some farewells one recognizes only much later.

It was autumn. The season was turning. The wind began early that year; before the trees had shed their leaves, something inside had already begun to fall. A leaf fell, and Fuat counted: one. He counted the second too. They went on falling, he went on counting; as if by counting the last leaf, something might change.

It is always in this season that the dandelions scatter. In the days when the wind blows hardest, resisting and resisting, knowing the wind will win again. When Fuat picked up the phone that day, he felt exactly that: a thing waiting to be plucked, knowing its ending from the start.

He dialed the number. Before calling, he paused for a moment. Because he knew that when this conversation ended, something else would have ended with it.

The call stretched on. For hours. A conversation that refused to be ended. What mattered was not what was said but what could not be said. Both knew the same thing; neither had the heart to say it aloud. Every silence was another way of saying "hang up now." And neither of them could bring themselves to say it.

Somewhere along the way, Fuat's voice cracked. The man who could soften any situation with a single sentence was left without words. He managed to say only one thing, and that through tears: ömrüm — my life. He said it this time not with the lightness of the first day but with the weight of an entire lifetime; as if he were seeing off, one by one, all the years inside him. Two people, miles apart, wept at the same moment for the same thing.

They wandered the past. The first day, the light beneath the blue pyramid. The lawn. Yağmur's hands dusted with flour. They named each memory in turn; but this time the memories did not warm them — they chilled them instead. For to remember a memory knowing you will never live it again is the sharpest form of losing it.

At one point, Yağmur's mother came to the phone. The woman who had always looked warmly on Fuat in that tea-scented garden spoke now in the gentlest voice. She did not accuse, did not judge. She only seemed to be saying, with that calm sorrow only a mother can know, that what had happened had been beyond anyone's control.

For Yağmur, this parting was heavy in another way. Because her memory let go of nothing she had lived. Fuat, with time, might blur certain days; but Yağmur would carry every moment inside her at its original sharpness. For her, forgetting was not a mercy; remembering was a sentence. Perhaps that was why she never loved easily; she knew that whatever she loved, she would have to carry forever.

Wherever she went, she took with her every detail she had kept. Even the silver brooch Fuat's grandmother had pinned to her collar. For years, in the corner of a drawer, that century-old silver stood watch amid the scent of another mother; and while time erased everything, that one pin rowed against the current.

At last, the line went dead.

That was the day a star began to draw away. What Fuat had learned years before, gazing at the sky from a woman's knee — that departing light shifts toward red — was no longer a piece of knowledge. Nor was it a metaphor. It was real. The color inside him began to shift that night, and it never returned to its place. (We assume colors come back. They do not. A light once shifted toward red looks in that direction for the rest of its life.)

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The first days after a parting are a darkness in which one wants to erase even one's own existence.

He shut himself in. He drew the curtains. A city of lead had settled on his chest, pressing harder with every breath; and his days were spent pushing that city upward. Even simply standing still was the labor of keeping his bones from breaking beneath an invisible ocean. There was a scream in him that would not come out. The city no longer lightened; the ocean no longer receded. (The worst thing about pain is not its violence but that it can be grown used to; a man adopts his wound so thoroughly that healing comes to feel like a kind of loss. The most dangerous prison is the one whose key we have grown fond of.)

One day they dragged him outside. A café. And there, a few tables away, he saw Yağmur. She was not alone; someone was with her. Something tore inside him. So the world had gone on turning without him; turning, no less, at someone else's side. He rose and left without a word. That night, the weight on his chest doubled.

Then he changed. And it was not a change for the better.

A man who cannot carry his pain tries to make others carry it. He wrote to Yağmur's friends; he spat the poison inside him at people who deserved none of it. He spent his nights in clubs; with women whose names he would not remember the next day, at strangers' tables, he drank and drank. The drink did not still the pain; it only numbed it for a few hours and then gave it back twofold. He knew this, and still he walked through the same door every night. Because to be sober was to remember, and to remember was unbearable.

In the end, he did the worst thing he could do: he took Yağmur's closest friend to bed. Not out of love, not out of tenderness. Only because, unable to reach Yağmur, he wanted to damage the thing that stood nearest to her.

Revenge is, most of the time, self-punishment dressed in the clothes of love. In those days Fuat was punishing himself far more

than Yağmur. Every pit he dug opened into his own ground. When it was over, he felt emptier than he had ever felt. Revenge does not close the wound that opened it; it lays a new one alongside. (Striking at another, a man takes aim at the last clean place inside himself; unable to reach the one he loves, he destroys the one he carries within.)

Taner tried to save him. He called, he knocked at his door. But Fuat pushed him away too; for Taner was the last bridge that reminded him of Yağmur. The man who had once, unknowing, introduced the two of them now watched, helpless, the wreckage of that introduction.

One morning, with a sober head, he reread the messages he had written in the middle of the night. As he read, his face flushed first, then went pale. Was he really the man who had written those lines? He could not recognize himself. (The face a man cannot recognize in the mirror is, most often, his true one; what looks familiar is the lie he has been telling himself for years.) He deleted them all. But deleting did not make them unwritten. Some things, once said, hang in the air like a stain, even after they are taken back.

Then a woman came into his life. A good woman; better than the Fuat of those days deserved. Things grew serious with her; perhaps for the first time, he came again to the shore of an ordinary life. But something was always missing, a hollow he could not name. For that hollow has a definite shape; no one can fill it with someone else. The woman loved him — loved without asking anything in return. Fuat tried to love her too — and perhaps, in some part, he did. But "trying" is a word that should never live inside love. An empty house, when it takes the wrong person in, is colder than when it takes in no one; a two-person absence sleeps there.

One day, in a café, they crossed paths again. Yağmur was there. When Fuat walked in, the old poison rose in him and he staged a showy happiness; he laughed too loudly, drew every eye, wanted her to see. As if to say: look — it works without you. Yet this was a lie, told most of all to himself. At one point Yağmur moved away, refusing him the chance to close the distance. Fuat was left standing in the middle of the corridor. The man who a moment before had been all laughter was now caving in on himself against a wall. His love was still as vast as his hatred; the two fed from the same spring. That day he understood that he would never be able to part them.

There was an engagement, with that good woman. Rings were exchanged, a date was discussed, two families rejoiced. But it did not hold. At the last moment something failed, and the engagement was broken. Perhaps the woman understood, perhaps Fuat confessed, perhaps both knew without a word being said: someone else was seated in Fuat's heart, and that seat was still taken. A man cannot give his word with a heart already full. The woman withdrew in silence. (Nothing wounds us like the kindnesses we do not deserve; because we know we will never be able to repay them.)

It was the last night of the year. Fuat gathered a crowd at his home; the music was loud, the lights were low. And that night, a woman came through the door. Her name was Pelin. Fuat did not know, in that moment, that this woman would fill long years of his life; first as a companion, then as a swamp. That night he thought only that a new year was beginning.

As for Yağmur — in those years Fuat knew nothing of what she was doing. Had he known, he might have been surprised: she too, while seeming to go on with her life, carried the same silent rain inside her. Two people, unknown to each other, were living the same absence in separate cities. Whichever woman he stood

beside, Fuat carried the same name within him always; like a rain waiting for years beneath dry ground.

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The first years with Pelin were not bad. They built a good companionship. From the outside, one might have seen a happy couple. But deep down Fuat knew that this was not happiness — it was a way of passing the time. The hollow inside him never filled; only, once the daily noise of a life had settled over it, its voice was muted for a while. To mute a thing is not to destroy it. Carrying it became, for a time, a way of staying. And staying is not always loving. Sometimes it is only that leaving, too, takes strength; and that strength has long since run out.

One night, late, Fuat fell asleep. And in his sleep he said something. A name. Weeping, in a whisper: Yağmur. Pelin heard it. She said nothing then; but from that night on, the name settled somewhere between the two of them, never to leave. (A name spoken in sleep is truer than all the sentences built by day; for no consciousness has strained it.)

Trust is like a bowl of glass; once cracked, it still holds water, but from then on you look not at the water but at the crack. In time, Pelin turned that name into a weapon. In every fight she hurled those two syllables in Fuat's face. And with every throw, both of them bled a little more. To share a secret is to hand the other not a key but a knife; and we always hold that knife out to the one we trust most.

The years that followed were the years of a sinking. They set up a home together; and the step they had taken for a remedy became the true beginning of the collapse. Two people built a closed circuit that drew out the worst in each other. Alcohol became a daily thing, and gambling joined it. Money, hope, respect; all of it melted away at the same table. It was a war no one

won. In those years, Fuat avoided looking in mirrors. Because in the mirror he saw someone growing stranger to himself by the day; it was no longer the face of the man who had once talked like poetry.

But in the middle of that darkness, one night, he did something.

Pelin was asleep. Without being able to explain it even to himself, Fuat searched for Yağmur's name on a poetry site. And he found it; a dead account, plainly untouched for years. There, that night, he left the poem he had carried inside him all those years — the poem that had never gone quiet since the first day of the loss, entrusted now, for the first time, to a page. The Dandelion. And beneath it he wrote a single sentence, bearing the whole weight of the years: I have not forgotten you for a single moment.

In that moment, for the first time in years, he had done something unmasked and true; in the middle of all that mire, he had touched again the one clean thing left inside him. Then he closed the site. Yağmur never logged into that account; and so the poem, and the sentence, waited there for years, in the dark, to be read.

Years passed. Little remained.

That long bond with Pelin reached, at last, a weight neither of them could carry, and came apart. It was not a quarrel but a surrender; a war two people abandoned because neither had the strength left to ruin the other any further. Then the rest followed. His business failed. He lost his father. He shut himself in; drew the curtains, left the world outside.

In that darkness there was a single stirring: a false name, a screen. And one night, to that name, a notification came. A name. Fuat knew it without reading the letters.

For days he did not know what to do. In the end, from behind that false name, with trembling fingers, he wrote a message. He did not say who he was. He said only this: look at a certain poetry site.

When Yağmur opened the site, her hands were trembling, her eyes already full. And she saw it. The poem left there years before. The Dandelion. And the sentence beneath it: I have not forgotten you for a single moment. Like the silver brooch standing watch in the corner of her drawer, these lines too had waited for her; while time erased everything, one pin, and one poem, had rowed against the current.

They talked for days. Night and day, tirelessly; as if trying to fit the reckoning of long years into a handful of days. Both of them saw that all that time apart had not worn out the thing between them — it had only covered it over. When they lifted the cover, everything beneath stood there with the freshness of the first day.

One night, mid-conversation, they both wrote the same sentence at the same instant; word for word, down to the comma. First they were startled, then they laughed — before two screens, miles apart. Then it happened again, and again. As if the years had never passed, as if the conversation had never broken off; as if even while they were silent, the Yağmur and the Fuat each had built within themselves had gone on talking — and now they were only reading aloud to each other what those inner voices had been saying. (Two people part; but the two people they have built inside each other never part. Perhaps that is the true fidelity: to keep someone speaking inside you, even in their absence.)

But inside those conversations, Fuat learned something; a thing that made a place in him ache the instant he learned it. Yağmur had married. She had a son. Hearing it, Fuat was glad and he was broken, both at once. Glad, because Yağmur had built a life, was living. Broken, because he was not inside that life. So the laugh had

not been erased from the world; it was only laughing inside another house now. (To want the happiness of the one you love, and to accept your own absence from that happiness — it is between these two that love is truly tested.)

And in the end, he understood he was not ready. In such ruins, at so late an hour, he had no right — he thought — to cast a shadow over the order of Yağmur's life. He drew himself back; he pushed Yağmur away, because he loved her.

A painful silence began. This time they knew: the other was there, one tap away, within writing distance. But choosing not to write was harder than being unable to reach. A person burns less for the one they could never reach than for the one they renounced when reaching was possible.

One spring, Yağmur entered the poetry site again. This time she found new poems; the ones Fuat had written through those silent seasons. And she could not hold back — she wrote again. The longing overflowed once more; as if there had been no pause at all, they went on from where they had left off. One night Yağmur wrote only this: I miss you. Fuat answered her not with a sentence but with a poem. They were going, he wrote; the place they thought they were going and the place they arrived were worlds apart. Even drawing away, they were drawing near. Since they could not kiss, they were dying into each other tonight — what a noble night. For its eternity was born of her absence; the farther they drew apart, the closer, little by little, they came.

And in those days, talking and talking, they discovered a strange thing. For years, unknown to each other, they had been listening to the same songs. The same voices, the same sorrow; each behind their own window, deep in the night, imagining the other. (Two people listening to the same song at the same hour, not knowing of each other — even if they never meet, somewhere they

have already met.) When they learned this, both fell silent. For some coincidences are too large to be coincidence.

But this closeness was opening a wound, even as it healed. Every message sharpened the truth that they could not be together. The nearer they drew to each other, the more the impossibility between them hurt. Drawing away is the grief of a stray leaf for a forest no tree will take in; and sometimes a person draws away from what they most admire precisely so as not to wound it.

And they fell silent. It was the hardest decision they ever made: to stay away from each other because they loved each other. After that day, for a long time, neither wrote again. The voice between them was muted once more — this time by their own hands.

Neither of them knew that their roads would cross once more. Much later, in a place they never expected: a corridor of cold light.

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Twenty years passed.

The sentence is easy to write; living it takes a lifetime. A whole life flowed by in between: years, cities, faces. Fuat grew older; gray came into his hair, weariness into his face. But the color inside him never changed.

In those years, only one thing remained in his hands: words. And words never abandoned their keeper. The poems he had buried in the notebook became a book one day; the books called forth other books. The man who had once hidden behind a false name was now read under his own; his lines were learned by heart, carried off into other people's loves. Fame came, money came; the doors that had closed in his face for years opened one by one. But Fuat knew: none of it was shaped like the hollow inside him. Everyone loved his words; yet every one of those words had been written to a single person — and that person stood behind the

silence they had muted with their own hands. To make a whole country hear your voice and still be unable to reach one person: that is fame's quietest loneliness.

A late autumn afternoon. He stepped into a supermarket for some ordinary thing. Inside, it was cold, lit white. The aisles were deserted. He turned a corner.

And there stood Yağmur.

From the far shore of twenty years, at the least expected of moments, in a corridor of cold light. Older, but the same. Her hair still curly, still too much for her head. In her eyes, still that depth that forgot nothing.

Twenty years of not seeing each other vanished in an instant.

The bottle in Fuat's hand slid through his fingers. It struck the floor and shattered; the sound rang down the whole corridor. But neither of them turned toward it. The people, the broken glass, the aisle's cold light — all of it vanished once again. Just as on that first day, beneath the blue pyramid. The world stopped once more, only to show these two.

It was like a whale rising to the surface to breathe after years in the deep. Fuat looked at her like a man whose lungs were filling with air for the first time. The light inside him, shifted toward red for so long, turned for the first time in the other direction. Whatever had been drawing away from him all those years was coming toward him now; the color was deepening into blue again. (So it was possible to return, after all — however late.)

That night, they could not part. Twenty years of longing would not fit into a few hours. They talked, fell silent, talked again. Their bodies knew each other from years before; the mind lagged behind, the body led the way. Longing became flesh once more — but this

time not a ruinous thing, a healing one; two tired people reaching each other at last, after a long drought.

As they talked, Yağmur drew a detail up from the far side of the years. What Fuat had been wearing that first day beneath the blue pyramid. How the coffee in her hand had steamed. The first line he had scribbled on a napkin, word for word. Twenty years were as fresh in her memory as a single day.

Fuat stared at her in astonishment. The question he had once only thought, he now asked aloud for the first time: what are you — a djinn? Yağmur laughed — and for a moment, despite all the years, the old laugh that would not fit in a cup came back.

That night, outside, it rained. And it was no ordinary rain. It did not stop for days, then grew fierce enough to flood the city. As if the sky, too, were finally releasing something it had held back for twenty years. Watching from the window, Fuat thought again: this girl was not named by accident. Her name was Rain, and now she was drenching an entire city. Can a person's name be their fate? Perhaps names are the first prophecies that make us who we are.

In the morning, when Fuat woke, Yağmur was gone. But this time she had left no emptiness behind her. He went into the bathroom; on the mirror, written with a fingertip into the steam, he found a few words. Words that faded as the steam withdrew, and were already engraved in his memory for good: part the curtains — there is still a world out there, and in that world, there is still me.

Fuat looked at that note for a long time. For years he had lived with the curtains drawn; he had left the world outside and locked himself into the dark. Yağmur, before leaving, had whispered to him the way out of that darkness.

That day, he parted the curtains. The light that came in hurt his eyes. But there is, it turns out, a good kind of hurt; he felt it that day for the first time in years.

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After that reunion, nothing became suddenly easy. But one thing changed: for the first time, Fuat began to look forward instead of back.

Yağmur had divorced somewhere in those in-between years; she was building a life on her own, with her son. Slowly, with wary steps, they grew used to each other again. Not from the place they had left off twenty years before — that place no longer existed — but from somewhere perhaps sturdier, less childlike. Both of them had been broken; and perhaps for exactly that reason, each understood the other's broken places better.

Far from the city, they settled into a house with a garden. At night, with no city lights to blur it, the sky opened over them with all its stars. There, for the first time in years, Fuat tasted a true stillness.

They were happy. Truly, for the first time in a long time, completely. But one evening, near midnight, while an old song turned at low volume, Yağmur suddenly stopped. She set the glass in her hand down on the table; for a moment her eyes fastened on something that was not in the room. Fuat saw a shadow cross her face — a shadow he knew, the shadow of the thing that had chilled a hand beneath a table years before. What is it, he asked. Yağmur smiled and said, it's nothing; but she rose and went to the window, leaned her forehead against the glass, and looked out for a long time. Fuat did not press her.

That night, they both knew that even inside this completed happiness there lodged an unnamed splinter. For someone who

forgets nothing, forgiving is a far heavier labor than it is for everyone else. And love, most of the time, does not wait for forgiveness to be finished. (Perhaps true love is to act as though one has forgiven: knowing the wound is still there, and choosing, every morning, to love again.)

One night, in the garden, under the stars, Fuat turned to her.

Years before, under another sky, Yağmur had taught him how light shifts toward red; how the color of everything that draws away grows cold. Now, under the same sky, Fuat was giving the lesson back to her — but in reverse. For years I drew away from you, he said; my color shifted toward red, I set out on the road like a burnt-out star. But now I am coming toward you, and the nearer I come to you, the more I shift back into blue.

He fell silent for a moment. Then, for the first time in his life, he made a promise about the future without fearing its loss. I don't want to be with you with only what remains of me, he said — I want to be with you with all of what remains.

Yağmur wept. Beneath the stars, the century-old silver brooch still at her collar, she nodded.

The wedding was set for spring. A small, plain ceremony; only the ones they loved. Taner was there too — the man who, years before, without ever knowing it, had introduced two lifetimes; now, his eyes brimming, he had come to witness those two lifetimes joined at last. What had begun beneath a blue pyramid was about to be sealed with a ring, on a spring day, among the flowers.

When they sat down at the table, Fuat was at the lightest moment of his life. The ordinary, official words were being spoken. It came time for Yağmur's "yes."

There was a silence.

The question was repeated. Silence again. The smiles on their faces slowly froze. A coldness dropped into Fuat. He knew that coldness. It was the coldness, years before, in a garden, of the hand that had held his beneath the table; the one he had never been able to forget. Now that coldness was spreading over the whole garden.

For in that silence, something had happened that only Yağmur could hear. As the words "forever" were being spoken, that mind which forgot nothing had spread before her, all at once, everything it had not forgotten. Not only the blue pyramid, the lawn, that first flour-dusted börek; but the phone call, the staged laughter, the man she had once been unable to recognize. To say "forever" was to consent to keeping all of that, too, in the same room forever. A promise could be given; one could arrive with the rain one night and stay through a spring morning — but a marriage was another thing. It was a seal, and a seal does not come back. (A word can be taken back, an oath can be broken; but when a seal is pressed, the ink marks not the paper but time itself. Eternity is not given back to those who have once said "forever"; that is why some choose never to take it at all.)

At that very moment, beneath her collar, the grandmother's brooch touched her skin. The century-old silver reminded her, once more, of the burden of the one who does not forget.

Yağmur looked at Fuat. She looked long, long; just as she had looked on that first day, beneath a blue pyramid. There were tears in her eyes, but also something Fuat had never seen there before: a resolve. And she spoke. Only a few words, falling from her lips with difficulty: I cannot do this. Goodbye.

Then she stood up. And she ran. Just as she had run toward him at the funfair, years before; but this time, away from him. The same run, in the opposite direction. Two opposite answers, given by the same body, a lifetime apart. (A body can come running to the same

person, and go running from them; and be right both times. That is why we never wholly understand the ones we love.)

Fuat stayed where he was. He did not cry out, did not run after her. For he had been losing all his life; and he had learned the sound of losing. A hand touched his shoulder — Taner's hand. But this time, there was nothing to say.

Yağmur's decision was not for lack of love; perhaps it was the very opposite — because she loved. She explained it to no one, and could not have; perhaps even she did not wholly know. Perhaps she was wrong, perhaps she was right. But no one would ever know now. For some doors, once closed, leave both the right and the wrong behind them.

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Fuat went home alone.

The garden was the same garden; the sky was full of the same stars — the sky beneath which, a few nights before, he had made a promise. But now there was only one person under it. Inside, on the table, lay a ring never worn; a circle never slipped onto a finger, never closed. As once, years before, he had taken that stamp from its drawer and weighed it in his palm, so now he weighed the ring. One more seal; dried before it could be pressed. A tomorrow promised, but never sealed. (The heaviest burdens are the ones that were never carried; a man weeps for what he has lost and one day falls quiet — for what he never got to lose, he weeps his whole life.)

Not long after, Yağmur moved with her son to a distant country. Never to return. The city, the garden, all of it she left behind. She too, in her own measure, was leaving a whole lifetime behind. Of everything she left, the one thing she took with her was the silver brooch at her collar; the piece of a family that had fallen

to her, the pin that had stood watch for years in a drawer, and then at a collar. She could leave a lifetime; not that. One who does not forget carries with her, always, a piece of the bloodline of the one she loved.

Two people had flowed, a whole life long, toward each other and away from each other, and in the end each had vanished into their own silence. (Perhaps all great loves are like this: built not for arrival, but for flowing toward each other without end. Because the moment they arrive, they end.)

And so the story returned — if not to the place where it began, then to the darkness in which it began. The curtains were drawn again; one more clock stopped, and no one wound it. Yağmur's star, shifting redder and redder, had gone invisible once more. Fuat shut himself in; left the world outside one more time.

But this time, something was different.

Years before, the first time he lost her, he had thrown himself into a swamp; into drink, into gambling, into harming others. That night — the night of the broken wedding — the old road called him once more, and for one night, Fuat answered the call. He drank. He drank so as not to think, not to feel, not to be. Bottles toppled, the clock was erased; somewhere his body gave up, and he lost consciousness.

He woke the next day, toward evening. The taste of ash in his mouth, the old leaden city on his chest. He remembered the note on the mirror: part the curtains. He could not quite do it, perhaps; but he looked, long, at the last daylight seeping in at the curtain's edge. And there, in the middle of that wreckage, he made a decision. He would not go back to the swamp; this time, he would do the one thing he had ever done best.

He would write.

He sat down at his desk. He would pour into words all the years with Yağmur, everything from the first blue pyramid to that last spring day. But the words did not come. He built a sentence; it rang false, and he struck it out. He began again; too ornate this time, and he struck that out too. He could not find so much as a name for the book that was to hold a whole life; he wrote a title, crossed it through. Hours passed; it was long past midnight, still far from morning — that dead hour had come. On the page, there was not a single word. As if his gift had walked out with Yağmur; as if the spring that had overflowed in him all those years had run dry at the very moment it had the most to say. (A man cannot write his greatest grief at once; while the pain is fresh, it is not language — it is wound. The word waits for the blood to stop.)

He left the notebook open, rose, and went out onto the balcony.

The garden below was dark; still, the loquat tree could be made out, a dense shadow — as if even the night had not had the heart to erase it. Far off, the lights of the city trembled like an ember about to go out. Above, the firmament had opened: cloudless, bottomless. Years before, Yağmur had taught him this place — the light of the stars, their distances, the shifting of their colors. A star shifts toward red as it draws away, toward blue as it draws near. All his life, Fuat had been the one drawing away; his color had been red for years.

He leaned on the railing and lit a cigarette. The same question still circled in his mind: what should the book be called? And at that very moment, unsought, unforced, a voice whispered up from inside him; the name of a whole lifetime, folded into a single breath: With What Remains.

Because that was how he had always lived. He had loved with what remained, hoped with what remained, existed with what remained. And it was not a defeat; it was the stubbornness of a man

who clings with all his strength to the small thing that falls into his hands. He never held the whole, perhaps; but what remained, he loved down to the last crumb.

He knew for whom he would write this book. One day, someone would read these lines; without knowing his name, without seeing his face, never having known that curly hair. Perhaps, far away, beneath another sky, the woman who forgot nothing would one day take it in her hands too, and read the silence beneath every line. Whether she would read it, what she would feel, whether she would regret or be proven right — Fuat could know none of it. Who can say.

He drew a last breath from his cigarette and released the smoke, slowly, into the firmament. The smoke rose, thinned, hung for a moment among the stars, and then was nothing at all.

He thought of the flower he had once half-glimpsed in a field, years before; waiting for a child to come running headlong and blow, so defenseless, so knowing of its end. Well — the wind had blown, in the autumn when it blows hardest. And now, at the railing's edge, that flower was Fuat. The leaden weight he had carried on his chest for years seemed to be loosening upward; he was growing light — light as a feather, as a seed. Before him now there was no curtain, no wall, no boundary — only the firmament, open as far as it could reach.

And the color turned once more. Whatever had been drawing away from him was coming toward him now; the red was shifting back into blue. Drawing away blurred into drawing near, falling into rising. He gave himself to that blue — scattered like a dandelion's last seed; and the firmament, that endless space which knows no loss, took him silently in. Even coming apart, he remained one. How beautifully he had existed — how beautifully...

When morning came, there was nothing on the balcony but the notebook, lying open; the wind was gently turning its last page. Whether the pages were full or empty — no one but the wind ever knew. The cigarette had burned down to its filter and gone out; the railing still carried the night's chill on it. What remained, no one could quite say. Perhaps a man had finally learned to be content with what remains; perhaps he was no longer there at all, and had passed into the firmament. Who can say.

Only these words remained. Like the seeds of a dandelion, they bloom again in whatever garden they fall. Where this story ends, a wind begins to blow; and the seeds that wind carries — perhaps, at this very moment, you are the one carrying them.

They were beautiful still, as on the first day. And graceful; even in their vanishing.

This translation was made with Claude. For whatever errors it may hold, I ask the reader's forgiveness.

*The original work is **Kalan Kadarıyla**, by Yiğit Feza — you are warmly invited to seek it out.*